

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Scotland School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005

Team Members: Valerie Johnson, Education Specialist; Chris Sargent, Education Specialist; Penny McCormick-Gilles, Education Specialist

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Date of Report: November 11, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Surveys

Comprehensive plan

Teacher Assistance Team

Personnel training

Screening

Meets Requirements

The district's child find activities are implemented annually through of a combination of informing the public through newspaper articles, annual screening programs and on-going referrals from a variety of sources.

The comprehensive plan states the specific documentation that will be maintained for all child identification activities. This information can be found on page ten and eleven of the district's comprehensive plan.

The district comprehensive plan procedures meet the state/federal requirements, but at this time, the district does not have any students placed out of district.

The district comprehensive plan specifies the system used for receiving and documenting referrals. Teacher assistant team meetings are held as needed by teacher request. Referral procedures are on page thirteen of the comprehensive plan. Ten of ten children went through the Teacher Assistance Team process during the 2003-2004 school year, of those, six went on for further evaluation.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

Through interviews with the staff, the review team identified a promising practice of providing a school wide tutor within the Scotland school district. This program is available for students grades nine through twelve. The tutor is available for any student who may need extra assistance and is provided by the school district. Teachers may also refer students to the tutor for assistance

Meets Requirements

The review team validates all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting the requirements for general supervision.

Out of Compliance

Applicable ARSD 24:05:27:08. Yearly review and revision of individual educational programs.

Each school district shall initiate and conduct Individual Education Plan team meetings to periodically review each child's individual educational program and, if appropriate, revise its provisions. An Individual Education Plan team meeting must be held for this purpose at least once a year. The review shall be conducted to determine whether the annual goals for the student are being achieved. The individualized education program shall be revised, as appropriate, to address: any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in general curriculum; the results of any reevaluation conducted; information about the student provided to, or by, the parents; the student's anticipated needs; or other matters.

Applicable ARSD 24:05:17:03. Annual report of children being served.

Immediate Fix

The review team identified a student's annual individual education plan which was completed twenty-three days after its annual review date. This lapse in the IEP occurred over the December 1st deadline for child count verification. 11/18/2003 annual review date; 12/11/2003 current date. The Office of Special Education Programs will withhold from the district the IEDA funds received in error for the misclassified student.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Numbers of students screened

Preschool screening

Kindergarten round up

Child find through public notice

Number of referrals that do not result in evaluation

Meets Requirements:

The district ensures that a free appropriate public education is available to all children in the district. The district comprehensive plan policies support the provision of free appropriate public education to students who reside in the district, group home, foster home or institutions. The free appropriate public education information is located in the state handbook. Parent surveys indicate seven of eight parents are satisfied with the education program and services provided to their children.

Extended school year was provided for eight of nine students needing it. Extended school year services were to be determined in one student files reviewed and consent for extended school year services was acquired in seven student files reviewed.

The district comprehensive plan procedures for suspension/expulsion states: The suspension or expulsion of students in need of special education or special education and related services shall include the general due process procedures used for all students and the additional steps in the process that a district must take if the student is receiving special education or special education and related services under an individualized education program. A student was suspended on 3/4/1999. An individual education plan team meeting was held on 3/19/1999 to develop a plan to conduct a functional behavior assessment or to review the existing functional behavior assessment.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team validates the following areas as meeting the requirements: Free Appropriate Public Education (except for extended school year) and Suspension/Expulsion.

Needs Improvement

24:05:25:26. Extended school year authorized. The district shall provide special education or special education and related services to eligible children if the IEP team determines on an individual basis that such services are necessary for the provision of FAPE. An IEP pursuant to chapter 24:05:27 shall be developed by the IEP team and implemented with informed parental consent. The IEP team shall determine the length of the school day and duration of extended school year services based on the individual child's needs. A meeting of the IEP team is necessary to determine the necessity of extended school year services.

Through file reviews and discussions with the special education staff, the review team found inconsistencies with following the procedures necessary for extended school year services. In three out of three files reviewed when the IEP indicated a decision about extended school year would be determined at

a later date, there was no documentation available to show a meeting was held to make that determination. The special education staff stated this was usually accomplished by a phone call.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Student files
MDT/Eligibility report
Surveys
Personnel training
Child count

Meets Requirements

The prior notice document used by the district contains all required content. In thirty out of thirty-seven files, the district provided the parents written notice five days prior to proposing or refusing to initiate or change the child's identification or evaluation.

Needs Improvement

The district determined they needed improvement in the areas of written notice and consent due to missing parental consents in initial and re-evaluation files and evaluations conducted without being listed on the prior notice. In five of thirteen initial evaluations, functional assessment was not used to determine present levels of performance.

Out of Compliance

The district determined they were out of compliance in the areas of evaluation, eligibility determination and re-evaluation. Seventeen out of thirty-seven files did not contain functional assessment, **and only three files contained functional assessment reports as part of the evaluation report.** Parent input into the re-evaluation process was not documented in five files and seven files did not have prior notice indicating consent was acquired prior to administration of evaluations.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team was unable to validate the area of written consent as meeting the requirement. See Out of Compliance section for data to substantiate conclusions.

Through file reviews and staff interviews, the review team found the district to meet requirements in the area of eligibility determination. In eight out of eight files reviewed, eligibility was documented and met state guidelines.

Needs Improvement

The review team was unable to validate the district's conclusion of needing improvement in written notice and consent for evaluation. See Out of Compliance section for supporting data.

Through file reviews, staff interviews and documentation of a special education staff inservice, the review team determined the staff has made improvements in their understanding of functional assessment and has begun to utilize them during the evaluation process. In-service training was provided to district staff on 3/31/04 regarding the topic of functional assessment. In two files which had recently completed evaluation, functional assessments were completed and documented in the evaluation report.

Out of Compliance:

Applicable ARSD 24:05:30:05. Content of notice

The notice must include the following: A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report that the district uses as a basis for the proposal or refusal. In four out of eleven files, tests were administered that were not on the form for consent to evaluate; there was no notice given to parents about the change and therefore no consent was obtained to administer the test.

Applicable ARSD 25:05:30:04 Parent participation/input into the evaluation planning process

A team of individuals, including input from the student's parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs. Through interview and file reviews, the monitoring team found the staff does not consistently implement a procedure for documenting parental input.

Applicable ARSD(s) 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child.

The review team found difficulties with completion of required assessments for disability and completion of assessments without prior notification. In three out of eight files checked students were not evaluated in all areas of suspected disabilities. For example, a student was identified as being eligible under the category of developmentally delayed without completion of developmental testing in all areas.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Student Files

Parent Surveys

Prior Notice Forms

Teacher Surveys

Parental Rights Documents

Meets Requirements

The district determined the school meets the requirements in the areas of procedural safeguards by including all required content in the parent's rights brochure, which was identified as being given to parents in 100% of the files reviewed. All files reviewed contained a record of access and a list of types

and location. The comprehensive plan contains the procedures for a due process hearing and addresses the appointment of surrogate parents.

Needs Improvement

Of the thirty-seven files reviewed, the consent was missing on one reevaluation and on one initial placement.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team validates the steering committee's findings as meeting the requirements for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards. In all files reviewed, no concerns were noted.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Comprehensive Plan

File reviews

Student progress data

Needs Improvement

The district provided written notice five days prior to the Individual Education Plan meeting in thirty-five of thirty-seven files reviewed. In two student files the prior notice forms were missing.

In twenty-eight of thirty-three student files reviewed, Individual Education Plans were reviewed annually. In thirty-four of thirty-seven student files reviewed, Individual Education Plan meetings were held within thirty calendar days of receipt of the evaluation results.

In five student files we did not meet the deadline for annual review. In twenty-eight of thirty-three files reviewed the student's Individual Education Plans were reviewed annually, on or before the date of the previous Individual Education Plan.

Out of Compliance

The steering committee rated the school district out of compliance in the area of individual education program due to difficulties with modification, present levels of performance and transition evaluations. Modifications were marked, but no modifications were described on the modification page of the Individual Education Plan in four files reviewed. Two of the files reviewed said weekly, rather than annually. In six of thirty-seven Individual Education Plans reviewed, modifications provided for state/district assessments were needed by the student on a daily basis. The present levels of performance in twenty-eight of thirty-seven files reviewed contained specific skills in the student's strengths, weaknesses and the student's involvement in the general curriculum. Present levels of performance are linked to functional evaluation in twenty of thirty-seven files reviewed. Transition evaluations were administered in four of eleven student files reviewed.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Through file reviews, the review team found the district to meet requirements in the following areas: prior notice for Individual Education Plan meetings

1. In seven out of seven files reviewed, the prior notice form was complete, contained all content and was completed within the five day notice timeline.

Needs Improvement

Through file reviews and staff interviews, the review team found the district needs improvement in the following areas of Individual Education Plan content: present levels of performance and modifications.

1. In three out of eleven files reviewed, the modifications appear excessive and marked on an “as needed basis”. The review team discussed determining whether a modification was necessary for success in the learning environment or an as instructional best practice.
2. In two out of nine files reviewed, the present levels of performance were not skill specific.

Through file reviews, the review team was unable to validate the steering committees findings of needs improvement in the area of prior notice for Individual Education Plan meetings. See Meets Requirements section for supporting data.

Through file reviews, the review team was unable to validate the steering committees findings of needs improvement in the area of annual meetings. See out of Compliance section in Principle I for supporting data.

Out of Compliance

Applicable ARSD 24:05:27:13.02. Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In three out of three files reviewed, the coordinated set of activities was not developed using information presented in the present levels of performance. There was no record of utilizing the student’s needs, preferences or interests to develop a transition plan addressing the student’s goals in this area.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

File reviews

All surveys

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined Scotland school district meets requirements in the area of least restrictive environment based on their findings from file reviews, surveys and assessment of their special education program. The committee found evidence of regular education teacher involvement in the IEP process and modifications through the teacher surveys. Eighteen of twenty educators surveyed indicated they have opportunity to provide input into the development of the student's individual education plan. Nineteen of twenty educators surveyed indicated they modify and adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students. The percentage of students receiving services in the regular classroom with modifications has gone from 52.96% to 55.17% to 50% over the past 3 years. The state average for the year 2002 was 55.92%. The districts comprehensive plan provides procedures for determining placement options using the continuum of alternative placements. In the past three years, students have received services in the following settings on the continuum: eighty regular classroom with modification, fifty-five resource room, one early childhood setting, and two home.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Through file reviews, observations of regular classroom and interviews the review team validated the steering committees findings in the area of least restrictive environment.